CLAIMS

1. A method of controlling on-line access to reference materials, comprising:

receiving an on-line request for a reference material;

determining if a copy of the requested reference material is available;

providing access to the copy of the requested reference material if the requested reference material is available; and

temporarily denying access to the requested reference material if the requested reference material is not available.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein providing access to the copy of the requested reference material includes transmitting the copy of the requested reference material as a digital electronic file.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein providing access to the copy of the requested reference material includes transmitting the copy of the requested reference material as HTML.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein providing access to the copy of the requested reference material includes transmitting the copy of the requested reference material as HTML including a client side agent programmed to provide an indication when the transmitted copy of the requested reference material has been replaced.

5. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

receiving an indication when access to the copy of the requested material is terminated.

6. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

passing a token if a copy of the requested material is available; and

3   receiving an indication in the form of a return of the token when access to the

4   copy of the requested material is terminated.

1   7.   The method of claim 1, further comprising:

2   monitoring a client side browser to determine when an image of the requested

3   reference materials has been replaced.

1   8.   The method of claim 1, further comprising:

2   monitoring a client side browser to determine when the client side browser has

3   been idle for a prescribed period of time.

1   9.   The method of claim 1 wherein determining if a copy of the requested

2   reference material is available includes comparing a number of copies of the requested

3   reference materials to which access is currently being provided with a maximum number of

4   copies of the requested reference materials for which access can contractually be provided.

1   10.   The method of claim 1 wherein determining if a copy of the requested

2   reference material is available includes determining if a server has possession of a token

3   corresponding to the requested reference materials.

1   11.   A method of providing access to reference materials, comprising:

2   providing view access to a requested reference material if the requested

3   reference material is made available on an unlimited basis;

4   providing view access to the requested reference material if the requested

5   reference material is made available on a limited basis and a number of requesters currently

6   having view access to the requested reference material is less than a defined maximum

7   number of concurrent viewers for the requested reference material; and

8   temporarily denying view access to the requested reference material if the

9   requested reference material is made available on a limited basis and the number of

10   requesters currently having view access to the requested reference material is at least equal to

11   the defined maximum number of concurrent viewers for the requested reference material.

12.   The method of claim 11, further comprising:

receiving an indication from a client side agent in the form of a return of a token when the copy of the requested reference material has been replaced in a client side browser.

13.   The method of claim 11, further comprising:

transmitting a client side agent from a server to a client requesting the requested reference material; and

receiving an indication from the client side agent when the copy of the requested reference material has been replaced in a client side browser.

14.   The method of claim 11 wherein the requested reference material is at least one of a text segment, a video segment and an audio segment.

15.   A method of providing access to reference material, comprising:

receiving a request for on-line access to a reference material from a requester;

determining if the requested reference material is made available on limited basis or on an unlimited basis;

if the requested reference material is made available on an unlimited basis, providing on-line access to the requested reference material for the requester;

if the requested reference material is made available on a limited basis, determining if all copies of the requested reference material are currently checked out;

if the requested reference material is made available on a limited basis and all copies of the requested reference material are not currently checked out, providing on-line access to the requested material for the requester; and

if the requested reference material is made available on a limited basis and all copies of the requested reference material are currently checked out, temporarily denying on-line access to the requested material for the requester.

16. The method of claim 15 wherein determining if all copies of the requested reference material are currently checked out includes determining whether a server has possession of a token corresponding to the requested reference materials.

17. The method of claim 15 wherein providing on-line access to the requested material for the requester includes transmitting a computer-readable copy of the requested material to a requester's computer.

18. The method of claim 15, further comprising:
receiving an indication when the requester has finished accessing the requested material.

19. The method of claim 15, further comprising:
passing possession of a token corresponding to the requested reference material from a server to the requester each time that on-line access to the requested material for the requester is provided if the requested reference material is made available on a limited basis ;
receiving an indication in the form of a return of the token corresponding to the requested reference material each time the requester has finished accessing the requested material.

20. A method of providing access to materials, comprising:
providing a limited access collection of reference materials made available as on-line copies to requesting users on a limited basis;
providing an unlimited access collection of reference materials made available as on-line copies to requesting users on an unlimited basis;
allowing only a central authority to update the limited access collection of reference materials; and
allowing users to update the unlimited access collection of reference materials.

21. The method of claim 20 wherein allowing only a central authority to update the limited access collection of reference materials includes allowing only the central

3   authority to add additional reference materials to the limited access collection of reference

4   materials.

1   22.   The method of claim 20 wherein allowing only a central authority to

2   update the limited access collection of reference materials includes allowing only the central

3   authority to modify at least one of the additional reference materials in the limited access

4   collection of reference materials.

1   23.   The method of claim 20 wherein allowing users to update the unlimited

2   access collection of reference materials includes allowing users to add additional reference

3   materials to the unlimited access collection of reference materials.

1   24.   The method of claim 20 wherein allowing users to update the unlimited

2   access collection of reference materials includes allowing users to modify at least one of the

3   additional reference materials in the unlimited access collection of reference materials.

1   25.   The method of claim 20, further comprising:

2   providing a user interface for requesting one or more of the reference materials

3   as on-line copies.

1   26.   The method of claim 20, further comprising:

2   receiving a request for on-line access to a reference material from a requester;

3   determining if the requested reference material is in the limited access

4   collection of reference materials or the unlimited access collection of reference materials;

5   if the requested reference material is in the unlimited access collection of

6   reference materials, providing on-line access to the requested reference material for the

7   requester;

8   if the requested reference material is in the limited access collection,

9   determining if all copies of the requested reference material are currently checked out;

10   if the requested reference material is in the limited access collection of

11   reference materials and all copies of the requested reference material are not currently

12   checked out, providing on-line access to the requested material for the requester; and

13 if the requested reference material is in the limited access collection of

14 reference materials and all copies of the requested reference material are currently checked

15 out, temporarily denying on-line access to the requested material for the requester.

1 27. A system for providing access to reference materials, comprising:

2 a limited access collection of reference materials, the reference materials in the

3 limited access collection of reference materials being made available on a limited basis;

4 an unlimited access collection of reference materials, the reference materials in

5 the unlimited access collection of reference materials being made available on an unlimited

6 basis;

7 an interface that receives on-line requests for one or more of the reference

8 materials; and

9 a processor programmed to:

10 determine if the requested reference material is in the limited access

11 collection of reference materials or the unlimited access collection of reference materials;

12 if the requested reference material is in the unlimited access collection

13 of reference materials, provide on-line access to the requested reference material for the

14 requester;

15 if the requested reference material is in the limited access collection,

16 determine if all copies of the requested reference material are currently checked out;

17 if the requested reference material is in the limited access collection of

18 reference materials and all copies of the requested reference material are not currently

19 checked out, provide on-line access to the requested material for the requester; and

20 if the requested reference material is in the limited access collection of

21 reference materials and all copies of the requested reference material are currently checked

22 out, temporarily deny on-line access to the requested material for the requester.

1 28. The system of claim 27 wherein the reference materials include at least

2 one of video materials, audio materials, and textual materials.

29.   A system for providing access to reference materials, comprising:

a limited access collection of reference materials, the reference materials in the limited access collection of reference materials being made available on a limited basis;

an unlimited access collection of reference materials, the reference materials in the unlimited access collection of reference materials being made available on an unlimited basis;

an interface that receives on-line requests for one or more of the reference materials; and

a processor programmed to:

allow only a central authority to provide additional reference materials for inclusion as part of the limited access collection of reference materials; and

allow users to provide additional reference materials for inclusion as part of the unlimited access collection of reference materials.

30.   A computer-readable media that causes a computer to provide controlled access to reference materials, by:

receiving an on-line request for a reference material;

determining if a copy of the requested reference material is available;

providing access to the copy of the requested reference material if the requested reference material is available; and

temporarily denying access to the requested reference material if the requested reference material is not available.

31.   A computer-readable media that causes a computer to provide controlled access to reference materials, by:

providing view access to a requested reference material if the requested reference material is made available on an unlimited basis;

providing view access to the requested reference material if the requested reference material is made available on a limited basis and a number of requesters currently having view access to the requested reference material is less than a defined maximum number of concurrent viewers for the requested reference material; and

9   temporarily denying view access to the requested reference material if the

10   requested reference material is made available on a limited basis and the number of

11   requesters currently having view access to the requested reference material is at least equal to

12   the defined maximum number of concurrent viewers for the requested reference material.

1   32.   A computer-readable media that causes a computer to provide controlled

2   access to reference materials, by:

3   receiving a request for on-line access to a reference material from a requester;

4   determining if the requested reference material is made available on limited

5   basis or on an unlimited basis;

6   if the requested reference material is made available on an unlimited basis,

7   providing on-line access to the requested reference material for the requester;

8   if the requested reference material is made available on a limited basis,

9   determining if all copies of the requested reference material are currently checked out;

10   if the requested reference material is made available on a limited basis and all

11   copies of the requested reference material are not currently checked out, providing on-line

12   access to the requested material for the requester; and

13   if the requested reference material is made available on a limited basis and all

14   copies of the requested reference material are currently checked out, temporarily denying on-

15   line access to the requested material for the requester.

1   33.   A computer-readable media that causes a computer to provide controlled

2   access to reference materials, by:

3   providing a limited access collection of reference materials made available as

4   on-line copies to requesting users on a limited basis;

5   providing an unlimited access collection of reference materials made available

6   as on-line copies to requesting users on an unlimited basis;

7   allowing only a central authority to provide update the limited access collection

8   of reference materials; and

9   allowing users to provide update the unlimited access collection of reference

10   materials.